

Making Tracks January 2003 Tracks Volume 03, Number 1

Missouri: Where Eagles Soar

By Tom Meister, Interpretive Programs Supervisor

issouri's winter eagle-watching is spectacular in January and we hope you can join us to view our national symbol in the wild. Each year hundreds of eagles make the areas around the state's lakes and big rivers their winter home. For an eagle-eye view of our national bird in its natural habitat, attend one of the Missouri Department of Conservation's Eagle Days events. The programs are designed to let you view eagles in the wild and learn about their population recovery.

Missouri's winter eagle population averages about 2,000 birds. Only Alaska and Washington have larger wintering eagle populations. Missouri's large lakes and big rivers, which usually remain unfrozen during the winter, give eagles easy access to their dietary mainstay, fish. The birds also eat injured and dead waterfowl and other carrion.

Eagle Days will include live eagle programs and information about the biology and recovery of eagles in Missouri, as well as displays and activities for children. Conservation Department staff and volunteers will be on hand with spotting scopes to help visitors view eagles. Because these events take place outside or in unheated buildings, wear warm winter outdoor clothing and bring your binoculars or a camera, your family and friends! The Conservation Department also has mapped out auto tour routes for viewing eagles at some locations.

Eagle Days events are scheduled for weekends January through February at locations throughout the state. Unless otherwise noted, each event begins at 9 a.m. and is free of charge. The Eagle Days event schedule is as follows:

- ♦ January 4 and 5 (10 a.m. on Jan. 5) at Willmore Lodge, Lake of the Ozarks
- ♦ January 11 and 12 at Little Platter Park Course Complex, Smithville
- ♦ January 11 and 12 (11 a.m. on Jan. 12) at the Springfield Nature Center, Springfield
- ♦ January 18 and 19 (8 a.m. both days) at Old Chain of Rocks Bridge, St. Louis
- ♦ January 25 and 26 at Lock and Dam 24 and the Apple Shed Theater, Clarksville
- ♦ February 1 at Mingo National Wildlife Refuge and Duck Creek Conservation Area

Missouri has many locations where you can enjoy viewing eagles on your own in winter. Riverlands Environmental Demonstration Area in West Alton, Swan Lake National Wildlife Refuge near Sumner, Table Rock Lake near Branson, Eagle Bluffs Conservation Area south of Columbia and Mingo National Wildlife Refuge near Puxico are among the sites where large numbers of eagles winter. Plan a visit to one or all of these locations and watch for eagles perched in the large sycamore, cottonwood or cypress trees along the edges of rivers or lakes.

For more information about Eagle Days, visit MDC's website at <u>www.missouriconservation.org</u>. Keyword: Eagle Days. To receive a brochure by mail with directions to all Eagle Days events, contact the Missouri Department of Conservation, P.O. Box 180, Jefferson City, MO 65102-0180, or call (573) 751-4115, ext. 3289.



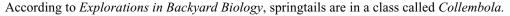
Powder Valley Conservation Nature Center

Winter Wonders

By Colleen Scott, Naturalist

Ever wonder about those folks who actually enjoy cold temperatures? What is it that draws them outdoors when it's in the mid-thirties? Perhaps it's the fact that they don't have to swat flies or mosquitoes. Or, maybe, it's the springtails.

Springtails? You know, snow fleas. These "fleas" aren't the kind that make you and your pet miserable. They aren't even really fleas. If you want to get technical, scientists don't even call them insects.



Still, you might think a springtail is an insect. This invertebrate has six legs, two antennae and a segmented body. It also has a short, hollow peg or tube on its underside that it uses to take in and expel water. Using its front legs, this creature draws water from its tube to rub on and clean its antennae.

Of course, you can't see a springtail grooming itself without a microscope. But if you're ever out in the snow and notice some "soot" moving around the base of a tree where snow has started to melt, it's not your imagination. You're probably seeing a few million snow fleas feeding and hopping about.

The irony of snow fleas is that they don't need snow to survive. That's just when they're most noticeable. These creatures are well adapted to life anywhere the environment is cool and moist. They live in temperate and tropical climates and have even been discovered in air samples, taken by plane, two miles above the ground.

Now, you may be wondering where the name springtail comes from. If you'd really like to know why snow fleas are also called springtails or if you're just curious about our winter wildlife, sign up for an MDC program or hike. You may just turn out to be one of those outdoor-loving folks everyone's been wondering about!



11715 Cragwold Road Kirkwood, MO 63122 (314) 301 - 1500

LOCATION:

From I-44 east in Kirkwood, take Watson Road, exit and turn north on Geyer Road. Follow Geyer Road 200 yards to Cragwold Road. Go 1 mile west on Cragwold Road.

AREA HOURS:

Daylight Saving Time: 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Central Standard Time: 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.

NATURE CENTER HOURS:

Open all year, 7 days a week, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

GIFT SHOP HOURS:

Open all year, 7 days a week, from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

ABOUT THE AREA:

112 acres of forestland and winding creeks, three hiking trails (one wheelchair accessible). Open to visitors free of charge.



Resident Artisan

Shelby Jones

Woodcarving Demonstration in Lobby Saturday, January 18 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Powder Valley is pleased to welcome woodcarver Shelby Jones, who will carve feather pins and a large decoy during demonstrations January 18 in the nature center lobby.

Retired from the Missouri Department of Conservation's Forestry Division, Shelby currently owns a consulting forestry business with clients throughout the Midwest. His work with native woods and forest products during his MDC career fits well with his avocation of waterfowl and songbird carving. A skilled carver who shows and sells woodcarvings nationwide, Shelby readily shares his knowledge of wood and love of a true American art form.

Shelby will be happy to sign and date your cast hummingbird pin, available through our *Nature Shop 2003* catalog or in our gift shop.

Don't miss this opportunity to meet Missouri artist Shelby Jones and have your hummingbird pin signed and dated.

No reservations necessary!



Powder Valley Gift Shop



New Year's Sale!

15% off all merchandise January 2 - 5



No other discounts available.

News from

Rockwoods Reservation

Would the "Real" Hedwig Please Stand Up?

By Keri Lanning, Naturalist

J.K. Rowling captures our attention and fascinates us with her stories about the adventures of Harry Potter, his friends and his pet owl, Hedwig. Rowling's stories are enjoyed by readers of all ages to the delight of not only elementary and English teachers, but naturalists as well. The mere mention of Hedwig during a program about owls easily gets 15 to 20 sets of wide, curious



eyes tuned in for more information about these wonderful and beautiful birds.

As with all fantasy/fiction works, however, there may be many fallacies about the characters. Hedwig is no exception. So, how true-to-life is her character in the Harry Potter books? Hedwig — a snowy owl — is described as being a large, beautiful owl, which is quite true. The snowy owl is the largest North American owl, with a wingspan of a little more than 5 feet, and by many standards is considered the most beautiful of owls. Other truths include Hedwig's solitary behavior, which follows the true behavior of this species. Although solitary, however, these birds do move south in harsh conditions, sometimes in large numbers.

The Harry Potter books speak of owls flying into the cities in large masses, almost to a point of eeriness. Surprisingly there is some truth to such a statement. Snowy owls are not true migrators in the sense that they follow a similar track every year, but in years of bad winters and low food sources these owls will travel south from northern Alaska and Canada to the northern portions of the United States. In such times, they have made front-page headlines with their sudden appearance in large numbers. In Missouri we have the occasional opportunity to see these beautiful birds along the Mississippi River. They have been spotted at the Riverlands Environmental Demonstration Area in West Alton on more than one occasion.

By now we know that owls do not make good pets. If Harry Potter did keep Hedwig in a cage, he would often have to clean up "white wash" or owl droppings and owl pellets. Owl pellets are densely packed fur and bones, the indigestible parts of their dinner that owls cough up after every meal.

We also know owls are not used as messengers because of their nomadic nature and because they are not the smartest of birds. Their large eyes and heightened optical sensors take up much of their already-small brains. This does not, however, make these animals any less fascinating. An owl's enlarged eyes enable it to see remarkably well with very little light. In fact, studies conducted on barn owls have discovered that these owls can locate a field mouse from the distance of one football field away from the light of one candle. Snowy owls have some of the best eyesight in sunlight and these owls can be diurnal when food is scarce.

Should this winter be a harsh one up north, keep your eyes open for visiting "Hedwigs" and keep your ears open for our common Missouri resident owls. They will be actively calling on cold January and February evenings.

If you would like to learn how to call in owls to your backyard, join us January 15 for an Owl Prowl. Call (636) 458-2236 to make your reservation. For more information about this program and other programs about owls, see pages 4 and 5 of this newsletter.

2751 Glencoe Road Wildwood, MO 63038 (636) 458 - 2236

LOCATION:

From I-44, take Hwy. 109 (Eureka exit) north 4 miles to Woods Avenue: left on Woods Avenue, and then immediately right on Glencoe Road; follow signs. *From Hwy 40 (I-64)*, take Clarkson Road south to Manchester Road; right (west) on Manchester to Hwy. 109; left (south) on Hwy. 109, 2 miles to Woods Avenue; right on Woods Avenue, and then immediately right on Glencoe Road; follow signs. From Manchester Road, take Hwy. 109 south 2 miles to Woods Avenue; right on Woods Avenue, and immediately right on Glencoe Road; follow signs.

AREA HOURS:

Sunrise until 1/2 hour after

VISITOR CENTER HOURS:

Open seven days a week, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., during March, April, May, June, September and October. The Visitor Center will be closed on weekends during July, August, November, December, January and February.

ABOUT THE AREA:

All facilities are free to the public, including:

- *Education Center with exhibits and interpretive programs.
- *1,898 acres of rugged, mostly hardwood, forested land interspersed with springs and streams.
- *Three picnic areas (all with charcoal grills), two with drinking water, tables, and one with toilets.
- *Seven trails (one is selfguided and wheelchair accessible) totaling more than 10 miles.

How to register for a JANUARY program

Reservations are required unless otherwise specified. Reservations will be taken Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Programs are intended for individuals and families only. If you are unable to attend a program, please call and cancel your reservation as a courtesy to those on our waiting list. Please limit requests to two programs per month, with only one to include an Ages 3-6 program. Please be prompt. Arrival after 10 minutes may exclude you from the program. Interpreting services are available for people with hearing loss, with five days advance notice.

ROCKWOODS

For reservations, call (636) 458 - 2236

Toddling Into Nature Owls

Thursday 10:15 a.m. – 11:15 a.m. & 1:15 p.m. – 2:15 p.m.

(Ages 3-6) Learn about the owls that live around Missouri and what to listen for in the evenings. (Reservations begin

(Reservations be December 23.)

15

Owl Prowl

Wednesday 7 a.m. - 8:30 a.m. (Families) Owls of Missouri are very active on January evenings. Join

us as we learn more about these birds and then hike outside to call for them.



Dress for the weather.
(Reservations begin
January 6.)

22

Owl House Is a Very Fine House

Wednesday

2 p.m. - 3 p.m.

(Families) Come help our little feathered friends beat the cold by building an owl house. Please bring a hammer. One house will be available per family. (Reservations begin January 8.)



SOULARD OUTDOOR TEACHER RESOURCE CENTER

For reservations, call (314) 231-3803

Nature Journaling for Homeschool Parents

Thursday

 $1 \ p.m. - 3 \ p.m.$

(Homeschool Parents) Calling all homeschool parents! Join us for a lesson in how to use nature journaling with your children. Program will include observing nature and winter sketching. Class limited to 15 participants. (Reservations begin January 2.)

February How Much Wood Could a Woodchuck Chuck?

Saturday

10:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. & 1 p.m. – 2 p.m.

(Ages 3–6) Otherwise known as a groundhog, the woodchuck is a pretty interesting character. Learn about some of its habits (like hibernation) through story, song and pretend play. Children must be accompanied by an adult. Class limited to 15 participants.

(Reservations begin January 17.)

BUSCH AREA

For reservations, call (636) 441 - 4554

7

Birds of a Feather

Tuesday 9:3

9:30 a.m. – 10:45 a.m. & 11 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.

(Ages 3-6) Learn about our feathered friends that spend the winter in Missouri. We'll make simple birdfeeders and then hike to the bird viewing area to visit

our winter friends. (Reservations begin December 23.)



Discovery Table MO has it all from A-Z

Saturday 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.

(All Ages) Come discover the great wealth of natural resources to be found in our home state! (No reservations necessary.)

13

Bald Eagles

Monday 9:30 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. & 11 a.m. – Noon

(Ages 3-6) Are bald eagles really bald? How big are their nests? Can they really swoop down and grab a fish out of the water? Find out the answers to these questions and more as we learn about our national bird. Kids will make

we learn about our national bird. Kids will make a craft to take home. (Reservations begin December 30.)

15

Flowers in Tissue

Wednesday 10 a.m. – 11 a.m. (Ages 7-12) Are the long winter days and being stuck inside getting your kids down? It's time to get them out of the house and started thinking about spring! Participants will learn to identify wildflowers and then create a beautiful picture of a wildflower made from colored tissue paper. (Reservations begin January 2.)

22

Bird Adaptations

Wednesday 9:30 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.

& 11 a.m. – Noon

(Ages 7-12) Why do birds look the way they do? Learn how a bird's features make it well suited for its environment.



JAY HENGES SHOOTING RANGE & TRAINING CENTER

For reservations, call (636) 441-4554

25 Introduction to Metallic Cartridge Reloading

Saturday

9 a.m. – Noon

Learn the basics of reloading handgun and rifle ammunition. Class includes types and selection of reloading presses, components, tools, reloading bench and cost. Limited to 30 students. (Registrations begin January 2. Registration deadline January 22.)

POWDER VALLEY

For reservations, call (314) 301 - 1500

6 & 27

Traveling the Lewis & Clark Trail

Monday

1 p.m. - 2:30 p.m.

(Adults) A volunteer naturalist who was fortunate to travel the Lewis & Clark Trail with his wife will share his experiences. (Reservations begin December 23 and January 13, respectively.)

8 Winter Color with Lichens, Ferns and Mosses

Wednesday 3 p.m. – 4:30 p.m. (Ages 7 and Up) The skies may be gray, but many colors can be found in the woods. After learning how lichens, ferns and mosses color the winter landscape, we'll walk in the woods to see what colors we can find. Frontiers Connection: Activity #23. (Reservations begin December 27.)



9 Let's Make a Nature Book

Thursday 10:15 a.m. – 11 a.m.

(Ages 3-6) Learn about nature journals and begin your own. (Reservations begin December 26.)

11 Crisp Winter Walk

Saturday 1 p.m. - 2 p.m.

(All Ages) Why is a snow flea also called a springtail? What is that waxy covering on evergreen leaves? We'll answer these and other questions about winter wonders as we walk. Dress for the weather. We will be outside the entire hour. Frontiers Connection: Portions of Activities #6 and #32. (Reservations begin December 27.)

14

Feet, Feet, Who Has Special Feet?

Tuesday

10:15 a.m. – 11 a.m. & 1 p.m. – 1:45 p.m.

(Ages 3-6) How exciting it is to learn about different kinds of animal feet and the different ways animals use them. (Reservations begin December 31.)

Where Have All The Animals Gone?

Wednesday 9:30 a.m. – 11 a.m.

(7-12 yrs.) Explore the special adaptations mammals, birds and insects have for surviving winter. We will be in the classroom before going outdoors. Dress for the weather. Frontiers Connection: Portions of Activities #6 and #7. (Reservations begin January 8.)

23 Rocking Chair Storytime

Thursday

10 a.m. – 10:45 a.m. & 1 p.m. – 1:45 p.m.

(All Ages) Come enjoy a fun-packed time of stories, puppetry and surprises galore! (No reservations necessary.)

45

17

The Wild Singers

Saturday 10 a.m. – 11 a.m. (All Ages) Coyotes are becoming more

(All Ages) Coyotes are becoming more common in urban areas. Learn all about them. (Reservations begin January 10.)

HOMESCHOOL PROGRAMS

17 Frosty's Favorite Day

Friday 10 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

(3-6 yrs.) Frosty the Snowman likes the snow. Learn about snowflakes while you enjoy a story and make a craft. Be sure to wear your hat and scarf — like Frosty — so you will be warm when we go outside to look for snow. Children must be accompanied by an adult. (Reservations begin January 3.)

Snowflakes: No Two Alike

Friday 10 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

(7-12 yrs.) Winter in Missouri usually means snow. Discover how and why snowflakes form. Dress for the weather. Children must be accompanied by an adult. (Reservations begin January 3.)

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News from Busch Memorial Conservation Area August A.

Improving Pond Habitat for Better Fishing Part I in a Series

By Sarah J. Oakes, Fisheries Management Biologist

Want to improve the fishing in your pond? An otherwise healthy pond may not live up to its potential due to a lack of adequate habitat for small fish and aquatic insects. To make your pond the best fishing site it can be, spend a little time on habitat improvement. Your efforts will reward you with years of family fun spent on the winning end of a rod and reel.

Pond habitat is generally divided into two categories: brushy cover and vegetative cover. Both are excellent resources for fish. They are a medium upon which a myriad of aquatic insects can live and reproduce, providing an abundant food source for the fish in your pond. In addition, they provide cover for small fish. Without adequate cover, young fish are extremely vulnerable to predation. This results in an unbalanced predator/prey relationship, making life hard on all residents of your pond.

Improving brushy cover is pretty straightforward — add brush piles! A common way to increase brushy cover is to weigh down cedars or Christmas trees with cinder blocks and sink them. There are several ways to do this. Whichever way you choose, the key is in the placement. Brush of any kind will get the most use if it is placed in 5 to 10 feet of water; the tops should just reach the surface of the water. Placing trees or brush in dense groupings is better than scattering single trees throughout the pond. Brush piles will decay over time and need to be replenished every few years.

To find out more about adding brushy cover to your pond, contact the MDC St. Louis Regional Office and ask for the publication Fishing in a Barrel or talk to your local MDC pond biologist about specific recommendations for your pond.

Coming in May: Part II — Improving Pond Habitat for Better Fishing (Vegetation)



Witch Hazel – Not *Too* Spooky

By Kathy Thiele, Naturalist

Perhaps you're thinking this article should have appeared in October. After all, it's about a witch, right? Wrong — it's about a shrub! Now you're thinking, "Who names these things anyway? Shrubs don't look like witches." Well, witch hazel gets its name from the fact that people used its forked branches for divining, dowsing, or "witching" for water or minerals. I've never tried witching for water with witch hazel branches but I've done it with coat hangers and it works. No one seems to know why. Kinda spooky, huh?

Missouri has two species of witch hazel. Eastern witch hazel (*Hamamelis virginiana*) is restricted to a handful of counties here in Missouri, whereas Ozark witch hazel (Hamamelis vernalis) is found throughout the Ozarks. According to Shrubs and Woody Vines of Missouri by Don Kurz, virginiana occurs in moist woodlands on north-facing or east-facing slopes or in wooded valleys along streams. Vernalis is found in gravel and rocky streambeds, at the base of rocky slopes along streams, and rarely on wooded hillsides in rocky draws. The most obvious difference between these two species, though, is when they bloom. Eastern witch hazel blooms October through December and Ozark witch hazel blooms January through April.

For most people, finding a flower in winter is kinda spooky — or maybe I should say magical. Early Native Americans believed that because witch hazel flowered at such an odd time, the "Great Spirit" was revealing to them a plant with magical properties. For this reason, they used it to heal wounds and sores, relieve aches and pains and soothe burns and bruises. Today a variety of skin-care products boast witch hazel as an ingredient. It's used in cleansing creams, shaving lotion, soaps and skin toner. It is also used to treat sunburn, inflamed skin, minor cuts, scrapes and burns and even hemorrhoids.

Now is the time to get out and start looking for this blooming shrub. It's not too spooky and it just might put a little magic back into your winter!

2360 Highway D St. Charles, MO 63304 (636) 441 - 4554

LOCATION:

From Hwv 40, take 94 south to Hwy. D; turn west on D for approx. 1 mile. From I-70, take 94/First Capitol exit; turn south on Hwy. 94 to Hwy. D; turn west on D for approx. 1 mile. The area entrance is on the north side of Hwy. D.

HOURS:

Area is open from 6 a.m. until 10 p.m. See area regulations for special hunt hours. Fishing hours are from 6 a.m. until 9 p.m. Rental boats are available April 1 through September 30. The office is open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. until 5 p.m. and Saturday and Sunday from 8 a.m. until 4 p.m. It is closed some state holidays.

ABOUT THE AREA:

6,987 acres with 32 lakes and 40 ponds totaling 526 acres of water for fishing. There are six viewing blinds (two are wheelchair accessible), seven hiking trails totaling 5 miles, picnic area, staffed firearms range, and fishing jetties (some are wheelchair accessible). The area has interpretive programs, exhibits and demonstration sites and is used by bicyclists.





New Aquatic Education Sites Available In 2003

The Missouri Department of Conservation proudly announces that it will have one new and one rehabilitated site to add to

Aquatic Resources education efforts in the greater St. Louis area in 2003.



Many of you may ask, "What is aquatic resources education and why would I want to teach it?" Aquatic resources education is a way to protect the integrity of our aquatic resources by teaching ecology and conservation, based on the study and use of a representative aquatic resource such as a pond.

The first site is the Forest Park Hatchery, located in St. Louis' Forest Park. MDC has used this program site for more then 30 years to teach basic fishing skills to children and adults. The site, being rehabilitated as part of the Forest Park master plan, will include four fishing ponds and a wetlands area. The Forest Park site will be open to

schools and other groups to conduct aquatic-based programs.



The second site is the Bellefontaine Conservation Area, located at the corner of Highways 270 and 367 in North St. Louis County. This site also has a program lake and a public fishing lake.

Both sites are ADA accessible, with restrooms. To learn more about these sites

and others in the St. Louis area, contact Dennis E. Cooke at (314) 231-3803 (Soulard Office) or via e-mail, cooked@mdc.state.mo.us.

4

Homeschool Special

Calling all Homeschool Parents! Come join us for a lesson on how to use nature journaling with your children. The program will be offered at the Soulard Outdoor Teacher Resource Center, 1926 S. 12th Street, St. Louis, from 1 to 3 p.m. on January 23. We'll include topics such as observing nature and winter sketching. Space is limited to 15 participants. Please call (314) 231-3803 beginning January 2 to reserve a space.



The Outdoor Teacher Education Resource

Center

Hours: Monday - Friday 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.

(closed 11 a.m. - Noon for lunch) 1926 S. 12th St.

St. Louis, MO 63104 (314) 231-3803



Words of the Month: Aquatic Resources

Water and all things that live in or around it that provide for our needs and wants



BUSCH RANGE

Hours for January 2003:

10 a.m. - 4 p.m. Friday-Tuesday Closed Wednesday & Thursday

Closed January 1

For more information, call (636) 441-4554 ext. 251

HENGES RANGE

Hours for January 2003:

10 a.m. - 4 p.m. Wednesday-Sunday Closed Monday & Tuesday, Special Events & Holidays

Closed January 1

For more information, call (636) 938-9548



Making Tracks Missouri Department of Conservation 2360 Hwy D

St. Charles, MO 63304

www.conservation.state.mo.us



Join us for Eagle Days! See the schedule of events on page one.

Keep In the Know

Remember to complete and return your postcard updating your address. We don't want you to miss a single issue of *Making Tracks!*

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Making Tracks

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Milestones

Busch Conservation Area

Kathy Hellmann......500 hours
Al Newman......1600 hours
Marv Staloch.....1700 hours
Judy Rowe.....1800 hours
Karen Staloch.....1900 hours
Dorothy Niemeyer...2500 hours

Rockwoods Reservation

Mary Demmitt.......750 hours
Amber Edwards......700 hours
Kate Edwards.....1800 hours
Meg Wilson......600 hours

Thanks for all your effort and help!

Powder Valley Nature Center

Charlie Anderson...3300 hours
Ken Barket......2000 hours
Ginny Burmeister...1400 hours
Susan Hussey......400 hours
Ed Liesenfeld.....300 hours
Bill Maass.....2800 hours
Eleanora Markus....400 hours
Art Paule.....3500 hours
Christina Ritter....600 hours
Marjorie Yamada...2800 hours